

Rosemary Shaver

Class of 2012

When I began research on the submitted paper for my honors tutorial, PS 385 H, the Civil Rights Movement in the North, my initial focus was racial tension in Pennsylvania from 1940-1980. It was my intention to trace Pennsylvania's segregation laws and relevant litigation within the local, state, and federal courts in order to analyze the nature of the civil rights movement in the commonwealth. However, upon completing preliminary research with available library resources, I shifted focus to race relations during the historical era ranging from 1639-1990.

My initial research was highly concentrated on primary resources including microfilm from the *Scranton Times* and online archives of the *Philadelphia Tribune* at the University of Pennsylvania. I obtained access to the first source through the library collection, and the second with the help of a University research librarian. Additionally, I utilized the library's inter-library loan system to order several books. One of these texts proved particularly useful, Thomas Surges' *Sweet Land of Liberty: the Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*.

Upon reading this text and several articles, including a *Philadelphia Tribune* series titled "Race Riot! The time Bomb Haunting Large U.S. Cities," I recognized that by the mid-1900s segregation by the law had been largely eliminated in Pennsylvania. The concern during this era, rather, was racial violence motivated by discrimination and de facto segregation. Recognizing this, I began to research the history of African-Americans in Pennsylvania. Through a search of the library catalog, I located a book titled *African-American's in Pennsylvania*.

The next step in my research process involved an active effort to contact Sherman Wooden, a former University administrator whom my professor, Dr. Parente, suggested as source. On March 15, I attended lecture for the opening of the library's Underground Railroad

exhibit inspired by Wooden's *The Place I Call Home*. I hoped that this might provide me with some direction for my research. Before the lecture, I was able to speak with Mr. Wooden regarding my tutorial and research project. He suggested I obtain *African American's in the Wyoming Valley: 1779-1990*, which I was able to pick up at the library. This book allowed me to include a regional component in my paper. It also introduced me to several important cases within the local, state, and federal courts systems regarding the condition of African-Americans.

I also read Sherman's book. However, I carried out my research with the copy held at the library archives until a second copy was introduced into the general collection. The library archive was a tool I was unfamiliar with at the time; however, through this experience, I have come to find it a very useful resource. Although I was aware of the archives through the history department, I did not realize how accessible it is until I needed to use it while finishing research for this paper.

The final component of my project required me to research court rulings on select cases through primary documents. In order to do so, I used *U.S. Reports* and LexisNexis. Both of these sources were available through the library. I accessed *U.S. Reports* through the library reserves and LexisNexis via the online database. Interestingly, I found this aspect of my research particularly fulfilling. I enjoyed reading the actual decision as they were written one-hundred years ago as opposed to a summary.

During my research for this paper, I came to understand the importance of allowing one's ideas to evolve through research. If I had not shifted my initial focus when sources proved my initial assumptions wrong, the quality of my paper would have suffered. Furthermore, became more familiar with the library and the tools it offers. I was introduced to library resources that,

although I had been aware of, I had not previously used. In the end, I learned that the library is highly accessible to students, more so than I originally thought.